



# ROLL CALL



## Responsible conduct for warfighters

Week of 19 Jan 07 – 25 Jan 07

From day one of basic training, we are taught that we not only represent the Air Force, but we, in fact, represent all Americans. We are truly America's ambassadors, no matter where we are stationed, TDY or deployed. Judgments are often made about our country based on our individual actions. Everyone has to make responsible choices about their conduct, on- and off-duty, with this in mind.

Some Airmen believe that being told how to act, even off-duty and out of uniform, limits their freedom of speech. Why does it seem like even though we are defenders of American rights, we're limited in some of our own rights, such as freedom of speech? There are reasons.

The day we swore the oath of enlistment, we fell under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. The UCMJ guides what we wear, what we say, and how we act. We didn't lose our freedom of speech upon enlistment; that freedom has simply had limits placed upon it, and we must take responsibility for knowing and abiding by these limits.

We have these limits, supported by rules and standards, not just because of the world perception of us, but also in order to be a cohesive organization. Each of us brings to the table our own distinctive personalities, skills, morals, and values. While these differences have a time and a place within our service, we rely on rules and standards to bring a level of conformity in order to create a team of warfighters. These limits, rules and standards are reflected in our core values, specifically service before self, which calls on every Airman to set aside individual differences and desires for the greater good -- for the benefit of the Air Force and the nation.

We have different rules and standards because being a warfighter is not like any other job. For the duration of your Air Force career, our collective standards bind us. As Airmen, we are never truly "off-duty" and our actions out of uniform are just as important as in uniform. There are rules regarding off-duty behavior and off-duty employment. That is why we are required to seek approval for any job we have outside the Air Force to ensure the job doesn't go against anything our uniform or service represents. If you, as an Airman, make irresponsible choices about your conduct, the Air Force's image, national security and national diplomacy could suffer. Your actions have far-sweeping ramifications. That's a big responsibility.

While some of these limits, rules, and standards may go against what American civilians see as "inalienable rights," we all voluntarily raised our hands and took an oath that set us apart from our fellow Americans. That oath holds us to a stricter, but higher standard. Our core values reflect that.

So, yes, it is a paradox that while we defend America's rights, we sacrifice a little of our own. But it's a paradox we should be proud of and respect as Airmen.

### For more information:

#### Website:

For more information about responsible choices, visit the Air Force Crossroads website at <http://www.afcrossroads.com/websites/corc.cfm>.

#### News Stories:

Airmen challenged to make better choices - <http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?storyID=123034918>

#### Senior Viewpoints:

SECAF on Service Before Self: <http://www.af.mil/library/viewpoints/secaf.asp?id=234>